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ABSTRACT

In this paper the National Assessment of citizenship's objectives, procedures, exercises, and findings are considered as a source of implications for further research in the area of social studies. First, the methodology of National Assessment can be used as a model for developing objectives, and for devising exercises to measure attainment of social studies objectives. Social studies curricula now depend highly upon standardized tests which compare each student with the average performance of all students, emphasize the average range, and require each respondent to answer all items. In contrast, National Assessment instruments are criterion-referenced, measuring the performance of groups of students, are geared to the ability of the high, average, and low student, and employ a sampling matrix. Secondly, the materials and exercises are available to researchers and have application to other areas in the social studies. Lastly, National Assessment data at their disposal, social studies researchers can interpret, apply and extend the findings in numerous ways. (SJM)

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The National Assessment of Citizenship: Implications for Social Studies Research

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Assessing citizenship attainments may well be one of the most challenging measurement tasks facing educators and educational researchers. When I was in elementary school my teachers did not realize this. My citizenship periodically received a global rating of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." I imagine my teachers found this two-point rating scale very easy to use, and in a self-contained classroom there was no need to be concerned about establishing interrater reliability. Citizenship in this sense of "deportment" is still rated on report cards in many schools, but with the added methodological sophistication of five-point scales and multiple ratings.

My high school government teacher believed that good citizens knew everything in Magruder's, so that in one six-week summer course I learned the difference between robbery and burglary, and several other important facts which I no longer remember. Since there were questions at the end of each chapter, with answers on the teacher's manual, she didn't have any evaluation problems either.

The efforts of the National Assessment of Educational Progress to obtain measures of the important educational achievements of Americans have gone far beyond these earlier perspectives on the meaning of good citizenship. The National Assessment of Educational Progress was designed to provide census-like data about what important things students and young adults know and can do in ten

subject-matter areas: Art, Career and Occupational Development, Literature, Reading, Writing, Music, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Citizenship. In 1969-70 the first actual assessment was made--in the areas of Citizenship, Science, and Writing. The citizenship results reported in this paper are from this 1969-70 data collection. Since the ten areas are assessed in cycles, citizenship is projected to be assessed again in 1974-75.

The task of assessment of citizenship demanded careful specification of what knowledge and behavior was considered desirable citizenship in the form of statements of objectives. Existing lists of objectives were scanned, and teachers and students were asked to describe incidents which they felt revealed "good" and "bad" citizenship. Teams of reviewers, consisting of educators, political scientists, persons active in public life, and concerned lay people from all over the country carefully examined and modified the objectives until there was a high degree of consensus that the resulting objectives were indeed the most important objectives to measure. Every objective assessed had to meet the following criteria: 1) be considered important by scholars, 2) be accepted as an educational task by the schools, and 3) be deemed desirable by leading lay citizens. The most current version of the citizenship objectives is summarized in Appendix A.

Measures of these objectives were then developed, reviewed by panels of reviewers, and revised. While the format of many of the exercises is quite familiar--multiple-choice questions asking for specific knowledge, and short-answer questions--other situational exercises assessed ability to cooperate effectively in a group task and willingness to express views on controversial issues publicly.

This direct link between each objective and the exercise(s) measuring it allows National Assessment to report results separately for each objective. Results in each subject area are reported by:

Four age levels--9, 13, 17 and young adults (26-35)

Seven types of community (extreme inner city, inner city fringe, extreme affluent suburb, suburban fringe, medium sized city, small city and extreme rural)

Four geographical regions (Northeast, Southeast, Central, West)

Four educational levels of parents (not more than 8th grade, more than 8th grade but less than high school graduation, high school graduation, some formal education beyond high school)

Race (Black, Other)

Sex

For example, under the general objective of showing concern for the well-being of others, several items tapped respondents' concern about racial equality. Two of these exercises are reproduced in the Appendix, along with national achievement levels. To the first, a hypothetical case of minority group children being excluded from a park, the great majority of respondents (79% to 90%) at three age levels (13, 17, and adult) said they should do something about the situation. At least 80% of each group named one or more acceptable ways to help.

Thirteen- and seventeen-year olds were asked how willing they would be to associate with a person of a different race in five situations. While close to 90% at each age level were willing to do so in at least three of the situations, 57% of each age group expressed willingness to associate in all five situations.

The results of administration of the citizenship assessment should be of considerable interest to a wide audience--lay people who want to see what the schools are accomplishing; educators in search of objectives, criterion-referenced measures, and guidance in curriculum improvement; and to social studies researchers. Typically the findings of a research project are considered the source of implications for further research. I have taken the time to give an overview of National Assessment procedures and of the objectives and exercises used in the assessment of citizenship, because the methods and materials of the citizenship assessment--as well as the data from exercise administration--can be used by social studies researchers to explore several interesting and important areas.

First, the methodology of the National Assessment can be used as a model for developing consensual objectives and for devising exercises with face validity to measure attainment of the objectives. National Assessment measures are criterion-referenced, and in fact National Assessment was in the business of developing criterion-referenced measures long before the term became popular (Finley, 1972). While standardized tests compare each student with the average performance of all students, criterion-referenced measures indicate how well students as a group are achieving desirable goals. As National Assessment has demonstrated, criterion-referenced measures can be used in large-scale assessment programs and will provide information which norm-referenced, standardized tests have been unable to provide. To the extent that evaluation studies of social studies curricula rely heavily on standardized tests, evaluators--and their audiences--are receiving a very limited picture of the impact of the programs being evaluated.

Two other features of National Assessment methodology also differ from standardized testing programs. First, National Assessment exercises are prepared for the "high," the "average," and the "low" achieving student, while standardized tests usually emphasize the average range. As a result, sometimes the best students "go off the top of the test" or the poorest "fall off the bottom," thus inadequately measuring either group (Finley, 1972). Second, since the goal of National Assessment is to assess the performance of groups of people, it is unnecessary to have all the respondents answer all the items for their age group. Instead National Assessment employs matrix sampling, in which each respondent in the assessment sample takes only part (usually about one-twelfth) of the total pool of exercises.

The materials of National Assessment are also available to researchers. The objectives which were used as a basis for developing the first citizenship assessment are published and available from the U. S. Government Printing Office. These objectives were carefully revised and reviewed in 1969, as a basis for developing additional exercises for the second citizenship assessment. Having participated in the revision and reviewing of these objectives in 1969, as did Jim Oswald, I can attest to the painstaking efforts to include critical attributes of citizenship attitudes and behavior in these objectives. Since these objectives are believed to reflect considerable consensus about good citizenship, a political scientist suggested that this presumed consensus could be tested by asking respondents whether they agree or disagree with descriptions of civic behavior extracted from the objectives list. Comparisons between the two lists, developed about three years apart, reveal some shifts in civic attitudes, even in the choice of words. For example, the objective "help maintain law and order" became "support just law and the rights of all individuals" in 1969. The 1969

objectives list is slated for publication soon. Eventually the citizenship objectives might be of interest in historical studies of trends in civic education in this country.

The exercises are also available to researchers. To date most of the "recycling" of National Assessment exercises has been by state departments of education interested in conducting state assessments to obtain data paralleling the results of National Assessment. The state of Maine conducted an assessment of writing and citizenship last spring. They used virtually all of the available National Assessment citizenship exercises (i.e., those exercises which have been publicly released) which could be administered in paper-and-pencil format.

The data obtained from the administration of the assessment exercises is, in a very real sense, at the disposal of social studies researchers. National Assessment data was not collected to prove any hypothesis or point of view, nor to provide scale scores on selected variables. To some people, these are considered limitations of the data and of the National Assessment program.

However, the mandate to the National Assessment, and to the American Institutes for Research as its contracting agency for the citizenship assessment, was to provide information about accomplishment of important objectives "to teachers, administrators, school boards, curriculum developers, educational researchers, and other concerned citizens" in the hope that these people will bring National Assessment data to bear on their decisions about how to improve education. Recommendations for action have been regarded as outside the scope of responsibility of National Assessment project staff. The original intent of National Assessment was to provide quantities of reliable information with the expectation that this information would be put to good use. But the very objectivity

of their stance has meant that the data have been little interpreted and seldom used. Perhaps the vast majority of educators are not prepared to use assessment data to improve education in a systematic way, but social studies researchers can interpret, apply, and extend the findings in numerous ways, as suggested in this paper and in the small group discussions to follow.

The criterion-referenced nature of the data, with each exercise measuring at least one aspect of a single objective, permits comparisons with data from other sources. Individual exercises occasionally parallel items from other studies closely enough to permit comparisons of results, although such parallelism was not deliberately sought. Data from political socialization research with children, the Purdue Studies of teenagers' attitudes, and the data on a five percent probability sample of high school students collected by Project TALENT are some examples of data sets which can be coordinated with the item results of each successive cycle of National Assessment. And with the 1969-70 citizenship assessment as a baseline, comparisons can be made with results of subsequent admistrations of the same and parallel items. Given dozens of data banks, several with direct relevance for social studies research, and the present scarcity of funds to collect more data, researchers might seriously consider putting others' data to new uses (s s data).

At the inception of National Assessment citizenship and social studies were designated as separate areas for assessment purposes. While the logic of apparently "splitting off" citizenship from social studies has been questioned frequently, the effect has been to focus more research attention on citizenship than it has typically received. The first cycle of objectives and exercises were developed under contract by Educational Testing Service. The

exercises were administered during the past year, and reports of results should be available during 1973.

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s s data: Newsletter of social science archival acquisitions. Published quarterly by Laboratory for Political Research, The University of Iowa, Iowa City. Can be ordered from John G. Kolp, Editor, 321A Schaeffer Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City 52240, for $2.00 per year.

The following National Assessment reports can be obtained from the National Assessment of Educational Progress*, 300 Lincoln Tower, 1860 Lincoln Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203 or from the Government Printing Office**, Washington, D. C. as indicated.

*National Assessment of Educational Progress. Citizenship objectives. Cycle 1. 1969.

*National Assessment of Educational Progress. Citizenship objectives. Cycle 2. In press.

**National Assessment of Educational Progress. Citizenship: National results. (Report 2).

**National Assessment of Educational Progress. 1969-70 Citizenship: Group results for sex, region, and size of community. (Report 6).

*National Assessment of Educational Progress. 1969-70 Citizenship: Group results for parental education, color, and type of community. (Report 9).

APPENDIX

Summary of Objectives for National Assessment of Citizenship Achievement

I. SHOW CONCERN FOR THE WELL-BEING AND DIGNITY OF OTHERS.

A. Treat others with respect.
B. Consider the consequences for others of their own actions.
C. Guard safety and health of others.
D. Offer help to others in need.
E. Support equal opportunity in education, housing, employment, and recreation.
F. Are loyal to country, to friends, and to other groups whose values they share.
G. Are ethical and dependable in work, school, and social situations.

II. SUPPORT JUST LAW AND THE RIGHTS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS.

A. Understand the need for law.
B. Recognize specific constitutional rights and liberties.
C. Defend rights and liberties of all kinds of people.
D. Encourage ethical and lawful behavior in others.
E. Comply with public laws.
F. Oppose unjust rules, laws and authority by lawful means.

III. KNOW THE MAIN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENTS.

A. Recognize basic governmental purposes.
B. Understand the organization of federal and state governments.
C. Know the political structure of their local community.
D. Recognize the relationships of different levels of government.
E. Recognize the importance of political opposition and interest groups.
F. Recognize that democracy depends on the alertness and involvement of its citizens, and know how citizens can affect government.
G. Know structure of school and student government.

IV. PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRATIC CIVIC IMPROVEMENT.

A. Believe that each person's civic behavior is important, and convey this belief to others.
B. Favor organized civic action where it is needed.
C. Actively work for civic improvement.
D. Participate in local, state and national governmental processes.
E. Apply democratic procedures effectively in small groups.

V. UNDERSTAND IMPORTANT WORLD, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CIVIC PROBLEMS.

A. Understand social conflict among individuals, groups and nations and the difficulties in achieving peace and social harmony.
B. Recognize how different civic policies may affect people's efforts to meet their economic needs.
C. Recognize major environmental problems and are aware of alternative civic solutions.
D. See relations among civic problems and particular events.
E. Can generate good ideas about causes and solutions for civic problems.

VI. APPROACH CIVIC DECISIONS RATIONALLY.

A. Seek relevant information and alternative viewpoints on civicly important decisions.
B. Evaluate civic communications and actions carefully as a basis for forming and changing their own views.
C. Plan and organize civic tasks effectively.
D. Support open, honest communication and universal education.

VII. HELP AND RESPECT THEIR OWN FAMILIES.

A. Cooperate in home responsibilities and help provide for other family members.
B. Instill civic values and skills in other family members.

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On the following pages are samples of exercises used in the first Citizenship assessment. The percentages shown are results for the nation as a whole.

13:12-19
17:13- 9
A: 4- 5

EXERCISE A3* - Objectives: Understand and oppose unequal opportunity in recreation. Help other individuals voluntarily. Recognize ways for citizens to influence government action.

Ages 13, 17, and Adult: Interview

A. Suppose you and some friends were walking by a public park. As you went by, some children of a minority group were stopped from entering the park by a man at the gate who told them "The park is not for kids like you." Would you feel that you should do something about it? (Yes, No)

(If respondent does not understand "minority group," explain that a minority group is a part of the population differing from others, as in race or religion.)

B. What could you do about it if you wanted to?

(If respondent pauses before four responses are given, ask "Is there anything else you could do?" Stop after four responses OR when the respondent answers "No" OR when no response is given in ten seconds.)

Acceptable answers to B: Tell parents; report it to playground or related authority (city council, mayor, etc.); tell person doing it he was wrong; tell principal or teacher; write letters to newspaper; report it to police; take some form of social action (picket, handbills, signs, boycott); legal action; contact NAACP, ACLU or other civil liberties groups.

Unacceptable answers to B: Sneak them in back gate; hit the man; talk to the children to see if they would behave; do nothing; take them to another park.

Results

	Age		
	13	17	Adult
Felt they should act to help stop discrimination in a public park (Yes to A)	82%	90%	79%

* Not administered to the in-school sample in one large western state, one southeastern county and one southwestern city at the request of state or local authorities.

EXERCISE A3 (continued)

	Age		
	13	17	Adult
Stated actions they could take to help stop public park discrimination (acceptable answer to B)			
Stated 1 or more actions they could take	81%	92%	82%
. . . 2 or more . . .	39	52	50
. . . 3 or more . . .	11	17	19
. . . 4 or more . . .	2	3	6

Additional Information

Of those who indicated that they felt they should act to help stop discrimination in this situation, a high percentage also stated one or more things that they could do about it: 13-year olds (87%), 17-year olds (96%), Adults (93%).